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RETAIL PRICES - DECEMBER QUARTER, 1957.

Index numbers of retail prices for the December quarter of 1957 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases, December Quarter, 1957.

City.	Aggregate All Groups.			All Groups, excluding Price Move- ments in Potatoes and Onions.		
	Index Number.	Increase from -		Index Number.	Increase from -	
		Dec. Qtr., 1956.	Sept. Qtr., 1957.		Dec. Qtr., 1956.	Sept. Qtr., 1957.
		%	%		%	%
Brisbane ..	2371	1.5	1.2	2402	4.2	1.7
Toowoomba	2389	0.3	1.1	2418 ⁹	3.0	1.4
Rockhampton	2389	0.8	0.7	2422	3.5	1.3
Townsville	2480	1.5	1.1	2517	4.0	1.4
Bundaberg	2356	1.7	1.2	2387	4.7	1.7
Warwick ..	2351	0.8	1.1	2377	3.7	1.7

The "C" Series index number for Brisbane for December quarter, 1957, was 1.2 per cent. higher than the previous quarter. Higher food and grocery prices, no doubt due to the prolonged dry spell, were the main contributing factors, although there was also a slight continued upward trend in the remaining sections of the index. Potato prices continued to fall, and the index excluding potatoes and onions registered an increase of 1.7 per cent. In the complete index, very similar increases over the previous quarter were recorded in all cities, Brisbane and Bundaberg being slightly above Toowoomba, Townsville, and Warwick, while Rockhampton had the lowest increase of 0.7 per cent.

During the latest quarter, food and grocery prices, after the exclusion of the effect of potatoes and onions, showed a much greater increase than usual. Bundaberg, 3.9 per cent., had the greatest increase followed by Brisbane, 3.6 per cent., Toowoomba, Townsville, and Warwick, each 2.9 per cent., and Rockhampton 2.7 per cent.

Clothing and footwear prices and prices of miscellaneous items showed very small rises, their increases for Brisbane in the December quarter, 1957, being respectively 0.6 and 0.4 per cent. These were similar to the small quarterly increases recorded for these sections of the index during the two previous quarters. The only one of the five provincial cities included in the collection to show any marked variation from these movements was Warwick, where prices of women's clothing rose more than elsewhere.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases, December Quarter, 1957.

City.	Food and Groceries.			Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1957.		From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1957.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1957.
	A	A	B				
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	214.1	2.2	3.6	295.7	0.6	140.2	0.4
Toowoomba ..	232.7	2.0	2.9	300.7	0.7	139.0	0.3
Rockhampton	198.9	1.4	2.7	291.5	0.5	147.2	0.2
Townsville	191.9	2.2	2.9	292.0	0.5	151.7	0.7
Bundaberg ..	202.4	2.5	3.9	297.1	0.4	138.0	0.3
Warwick ..	222.9	1.3	2.9	300.7	1.5	144.8	0.2

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

Food and Groceries.

The food and grocery section (including potatoes and onions) increased in all cities, the increase being greatest in Bundaberg and least in Warwick. All cities showed considerably increased quarterly average prices for meat, principally beef, while smaller increases were recorded for bread, flour, tea, eggs, and house-hold soap. In contrast with the foregoing items, potato and onion prices continued to fall, thus countering to some extent, the general upward movement in this group of the Index.

Clothing and Footwear.

Although there was a gradual upward trend in some clothing items, principally women's frocks, this section of the index remained fairly stable in all cities, the rise during the quarter ranging from 0.4 per cent. in Bundaberg to 1.5 per cent. in Warwick.

Miscellaneous.

This group also showed only a very slight upward movement in all cities. There were increases in gas prices in Townsville and firewood in Brisbane.

Rent (4 and 5 roomed houses).

This index increased in Brisbane (0.4 per cent.) and remained unchanged elsewhere.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in December quarter, 1957, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	1 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{3}{4}$		19	3	1	0	3	1	0	6 $\frac{3}{4}$
Rockhampton	1	0	1 $\frac{3}{4}$		19	10 $\frac{3}{4}$		19	10	1	0	2	1	0	11 $\frac{1}{4}$
Townsville ..	1	0	11	1	0	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	2	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	1	1	1	11 $\frac{3}{4}$
Bundaberg ..		19	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	3 $\frac{3}{4}$		15	9 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	8
Warwick ..		19	10	1	0	3 $\frac{3}{4}$		14	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	2	1	1	5 $\frac{3}{4}$

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth industrial authority suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Since that date, adjustments to the basic wages have been made from time, often on special applications, both by the Commonwealth and State industrial authorities. Particulars of such adjustments have been given in previous issues of this bulletin. At present, the New South Wales basic wage alone is being varied automatically with movements of the index numbers, while in Queensland and Western Australia, the State Industrial Courts have usually varied the wage after the index numbers have been published.

Following the publication of the index numbers for the December quarter, 1957, the Queensland State Basic wage was increased by 3s. for males and 2s. for females, the New South Wales wage was decreased by 1s. for both males and females, and the Western Australian wage was decreased by 4s. 3d. for males and 2s. 9d. for females. There was no change in the remaining States. Current basic wage rates are given in the following table.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index.				Commonwealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.						
	Sept. Quarter, 1957.		Dec. Quarter, 1957.		Males. ^a			Males.	Females.	Date of Operation. ^b				
	A	B	A	B										
					£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2343	2362	2371	2402	11	18	0	12	4	0	8	4	6	27. 1. 58
Sydney ..	2622	2628	2613	2630	13	3	0	13	9	0	10	1	6	Feb., 1958
Melbourne	2568	2567	2560	2559	12	15	0	13	3	0	9	17	0	Aug., 1956
Adelaide	2485	2492	2465	2473	12	11	0	12	11	0	9	8	0	20. 5. 57
Perth ..	2746	2741	2707	2708	12	16	0	13	8	6	8	14	6	7 2. 58
Hobart ..	2681	2699	2684	2707	13	2	0	13	12	0	10	4	0	Aug., 1956

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

a Operative first pay-period beginning on or after 1st May, 1957. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

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BRISBANE.

25th February, 1958.

The "C" Series Retail Price Index.

(Base for Each Section: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended Sept., 1957.	Year Ended Dec., 1957.	Quarter Ended -					
				Dec., 1956.	March, 1957.	June, 1957.	Sept., 1957.	Dec., 1957.	
1. Aggregate - All Groups.									
Brisbane	863	2334	2343	2335	2321	2337	2343	2371	
Toowoomba	851	2369	2371	2382	2358	2373	2363	2389	
Rockhampton ..	861	2369	2374	2370	2360	2374	2372	2389	
Townsville	912	2453	2462	2444	2447	2469	2452	2480	
Bundaberg	841	2321	2331	2317	2304	2335	2329	2356	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns	864	2346	2355	2347	2334	2351	2353	2380	
Warwick	822	2321	2326	2332	2300	2325	2326	2351	
2. All Groups EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).									
Brisbane	863	2337	2361	2305	2330	2349	2362	2402	
Toowoomba	851	2373	2391	2348	2372	2386	2385	2419	
Rockhampton ..	861	2370	2391	2341	2364	2384	2392	2422	
Townsville	912	2458	2482	2421	2454	2473	2482	2517	
Bundaberg	841	2320	2347	2279	2311	2342	2347	2387	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns	864	2349	2373	2317	2343	2362	2373	2412	
Warwick	822	2318	2339	2293	2311	2331	2338	2377	
3. Food and Groceries.									
Brisbane	856	2654	2648	2711	2631	2641	2631	2689	
Toowoomba	814	2714	2691	2801	2705	2695	2654	2708	
Rockhampton ..	895	2663	2655	2708	2644	2661	2638	2675	
Townsville	955	2775	2769	2812	2764	2794	2728	2788	
Bundaberg	903	2691	2686	2748	2652	2697	2665	2731	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns	864	2668	2661	2725	2646	2658	2641	2697	
Warwick	846	2711	2700	2778	2659	2709	2698	2732	
4. Food and Groceries EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).									
Brisbane	856	2661	2699	2628	2655	2675	2684	2780	
Toowoomba	814	2722	2744	2705	2743	2728	2713	2791	
Rockhampton ..	895	2661	2697	2620	2649	2683	2691	2764	
Townsville	955	2783	2819	2745	2779	2803	2805	2887	
Bundaberg	903	2682	2727	2637	2669	2710	2711	2816	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns	864	2673	2710	2640	2669	2688	2695	2788	
Warwick	846	2702	2737	2669	2687	2725	2727	2807	
5. Clothing and Footwear.									
Brisbane	829	3230	3252	3192	3225	3245	3259	3280	
Toowoomba	829	3263	3290	3214	3252	3289	3298	3322	
Rockhampton ..	845	3268	3288	3228	3267	3285	3293	3308	
Townsville	840	3259	3275	3226	3262	3269	3277	3293	
Bundaberg	839	3276	3303	3223	3252	3309	3320	3332	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns	831	3239	3261	3199	3234	3254	3267	3288	
Warwick	825	3232	3261	3190	3231	3248	3258	3306	

(a) Excluded as from September quarter, 1955.